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PAGE 01 KABUL 66006 000000Z
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 6606

E.O. 12065: GDS 9/2/05 (AMSTUTZ, J. BRUCE) CR-M
TAGS: PING, PINT, UR, WN
SUBJ: SOME IMPRESSIONS ON OCCASION OF PRESIDENT TARAKI'S
DEPARTURE FOR HAVANA

1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY. THE AIRPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRESIDENT TARAKI'S
DEPARTURE UNDERLINED THE POLICE'S CONCERN FOR SECURITY AND
THE PRESENCE IN THE SOVIET UNION. PRESIDENT TARAKI AT THE
AIRPORT WERE MET BY SEVERAL MINISTERS, AMBASSADORS, AND
OTHERS. PRESIDENT TARAKI'S DEPARTURE WAS A SIGN OF THE
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TARAKI'S DEPARTURE WAS CHANGED, PROBABLY AS A SECURITY MEASURE. AS THEY HAVE DONE BEFORE, THE DEPARTURE TIME WAS MOVED UP AN HOUR ON SHORT NOTICE--THE DIP CORPS BEING NOTIFIED BY PHONE.

4. THE SPECIAL POSITION OF THE USSR WAS ALSO VERY EVIDENT. FOR ONE, THE AIRCRAFT CARRYING TARAKI TO MOSCOW WAS APPARENTLY A CHARTER AEROFLOT TU-134, PAID FOR, I SUSPECT, BY THE SOVIETS. FOR ANOTHER, THE SOLE VEHICLES ALLOWED TO PARK BY THE AIRPORT VIP LOUNGE WERE THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S CURTAINED MERCEDES AND HIS EMBASSY SECURITY FOLLOW CAR (CARRYING FOUR SOVIETS). EVEN POLITBUREAU MEMBERS HAD TO PARK THEIR CARS IN THE GENERAL PARKING LOT. (I CAN'T SPEAK FOR HAFIZULLAH AMIN SINCE HE LEFT THE AIRPORT FIRST.) FINALLY, SOVIET AMBASSADOR PUZANOV (THE DIP CORPS DEAN) AND THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR WENT TO THE PLANE SIDE TO SEE TARAKI OFF, AND WHEN THE ENTOURAGE RETURNED, PUZANOV AND AMIN WALKED BACK TOGETHER, THEIR SLEEVES TOUCHING, AT LEAST SIX FEET AHEAD OF THE REST OF THE ENTOURAGE. NOBODY AT THE DEPARTURE CEREMONIES COULD FAIL TO NOTICE THE USSR'S SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND PLACE OF HONOR.

5. WATANJAR'S AND BAREQ SHAFATIE'S PROMINENCE AT THE CEREMONY WAS ALSO INTERESTING, AND IT HAS STIMULATED POLITICAL SPECULATION AMONG WESTERN DIP CORPS MEMBERS. NEITHER MINISTER IS IN THE POLITBUREAU. WERE THEY PROMINENT SOLELY BECAUSE OF THEIR POSITIONS AS INTERIOR AND TRANSPORTATION MINISTERS, OR SHOULD ONE READ MORE INTO IT? BAREQ SHAFATIE WAS ONLY AT PLANE SIDE, WHILE WATANJAR WALKED BESIDE TARAKI WHILE HE "INSPECTED" OR SHOOK HANDS WITH ALL THOSE PRESENT. I AM NOT SURE WHAT TO CONCLUDE, ALTHOUGH ELEMENTS IN THIS EMBASSY ARE TEMPTED TO SEE SOME SIGNIFICANCE IN IT ALL.

6. TARAKI AND ME. FINALLY, I PROBABLY SHOULD MENTION A
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PAGE 02 KFBUL 06606 060936Z

SOMEWHAT ODD LITTLE INCIDENT. WHEN TARAKI WALKED BY THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, WE WERE CROWDED TWO LAYERS DEEP BY THE ROPE BARRIER. I WAS AMONG THOSE IN THE SECOND RANK, AND ONE OF WHOM GOT TO SHAKE HANDS WITH THE PRESIDENT. HE REACHED ME, THOUGH, AND, AS THE PROTOCOL CHIEF CALLED OUT HIS NAME, SEIZING HIS HAND THROUGH THE FIRST ROW TO SHAKE HANDS. HE SMILED BUT SMILED HARDLY AND REPEATEDLY REQUESTED MY NAME. I TOLD HE TOOK TO DO THIS WAS NOTICEABLY LOWER THAN THE US CASH DIPLOMAT KEARNEY'S NEW INTRODUCTION. HE SAID THAT IN THE ATTACHE SECTION HE ALSO GOT A VARIETY OF

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OTHERS, INCLUDING THE ACTING SOV MILATT.

7. I DON'T THINK TOO MUCH SHOULD BE READ INTO THIS, BUT IT DID MAKE ME WONDER WHETHER, IN A SMALL WAY, HE WASN'T TRYING TO CONVEY AN EXPRESSION OF FRIENDSHIP TO THE U.S. I'D LIKE TO THINK SO. AMSTUTZ

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